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## The Secular Motivations of the First Crusade

by

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### *Abstract*

The 11<sup>th</sup> Century Roman Catholic Church claimed that its motives for the First Crusade were sacred, based solely on religious principles. This research project is an attempt to reveal or uncover any potential secular motivations behind the First Crusade to the Holy Land. The importance of such research is to not only glean a better understanding of the events of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, but to also offer some assistance to Western foreign policy makers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A comprehensive document review of primary and secondary sources is the methodology followed in conducting this research. The challenge of discovering the motivations behind events that are over 900 years old is divided into two separate investigations: examining the motivations of the papacy and examining the motivations of the Crusaders themselves.

After analyzing the pope's religious and political environments in 1095, as well as his actual sermon, this research found that there is a strong possibility that Pope Urban II had alternative, secular motives for calling the First Crusade. Also, by analyzing accounts from Western and Islamic chroniclers of the First Crusade, this research also suggests that the Crusaders were influenced by both religious and secular motivations. This research, therefore, does not conclude any definitive answer of whether or not the First Crusade contained secular motives. Rather, it suggests that the possibility strongly exists, serving as a suggested starting point for future researchers on the topic.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*What leads to war? What leads to quarrelling among you? I will tell you what leads to them; the appetites that infest your mortal bodies. Your desires go unfulfilled, so you fall to murdering; you set your heart on something, and cannot have your will, so there is quarrelling and fighting.*

—James 4:1-2

The 11<sup>th</sup> Century “holy war” that was waged by the Roman Catholic Church against the Muslims of the eastern Mediterranean region (the First Crusade) has been described as having both sacred and secular motivations. The Church justified these wars as being sacred in nature, initiated and blessed by God Himself. But as the epigraph above suggests, the New Testament may be interpreted as a teaching that all wars are truly secular in their motives. So what were the real motives behind events that occurred almost a millennium ago? And if these “real” motives can indeed be discovered, what relevancy do they hold in the contemporary world? This research attempts to answer both of these questions by engaging in an investigative exercise that not only enhances the historical understanding of the Crusades themselves, but also sheds some light on the motivations behind the events occurring between Western and Islamic cultures today. Toward this end, this chapter first presents an overview of the critical analysis conducted in revealing clues about potential motives of the First Crusade. A discussion of the topic’s relevancy then follows, focusing on the West’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century conflicts with Islam.

## Overview

Too often when examining historical events, such as the First Crusade, it suffices the examiner to consider only the visible facts without diving deeper into the various contexts and points of view that surround and influence those facts. As Carl von Clausewitz teaches us,

We distinguish between the critical approach and the plain narrative of a historical event, which merely arranges facts one after another... Three different intellectual activities may be contained in the critical approach. First, the discovery and interpretation of equivocal facts... Second, the tracing of effects back to their causes... Third, the investigation and evaluation of means employed... In the last two activities, which are the truly critical parts of historical inquiry, it is vital to analyze everything down to its basic elements, to incontrovertible truth.<sup>1</sup>

With this critical approach in mind, this research is founded on a comprehensive document review of medieval and contemporary primary and secondary sources, and it divided the findings of the investigation into two elements: the motivations of the pope (analyzing his religious and political contexts, as well as his actual sermon), and the motivations of the Crusaders themselves (from the Western and the Islamic perspectives). Such an examination enables one to go beyond the mere recorded facts, as Clausewitz recommends, to the causal influences behind those facts.

Since some experts have defined the Crusades as spanning over five centuries and four continents, the scope of this research had to be narrowed. Therefore, this research encompasses only the First Crusade, which occurred between 1095 and 1131, and which geographically focused on Europe, Asia Minor, and Palestine. Although the scope has been drastically limited, it still suffices in providing enough evidence from which the motives behind these “holy” wars may be derived.



## Relevancy

So what makes a 900-year-old campaign relevant for today? Since 11 September 2001, the crusades are once again a topic of interest in people's minds. The world is closely watching the US response to the attacks to ensure it does not become another "imperialistic" or "genocidal" war on Islam from the West. Unfortunately, US efforts towards easing the world's fears on this issue were severely damaged when our leaders innocently employed the term "crusade" without a thorough consideration of its historical significance and subsequent political implications. "George W. Bush's off-hand remark on September 16 that 'this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while' met with a storm of indignation... Bush promptly apologized for his use of the word."<sup>2</sup>

This sensitivity becomes especially significant to our Islamic coalition partners.

Some Arabic allies being recruited for Bush's coalition against terrorism were particularly upset by his description of the pending campaign against bin Laden and terrorism as 'a crusade.' In the Arab world, the word conjures up images of the Christian crusades against Muslims from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries.<sup>3</sup>

If these coalition partners begin to believe that President Bush is truly on a "crusade" in the historical sense, the result would be a seriously fractured coalition in the President's "War on Terrorism," with the possibility of losing some very critical allies. Western leadership needs to be sensitive to the motivations behind the events of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, and to the Muslim perception of those events, if they wish to effectively engage that region of the world today. If this doesn't happen, the US may not only lose potential allies, but these same nations may actually be converted to our enemy's cause.

Since September 11, the crusades are news. When President Bush used the term "crusade" as it is commonly used, to denote a grand enterprise with a moral dimension, the media pelted him for insensitivity to Muslims... Attempting to capitalize on this indignation, the leader of the

Taliban, Mullah Omar, crowed, “President Bush has told the truth that this is a crusade against Islam.”<sup>4</sup>

In fact, even before the President made his comment, our enemies frequently employed the term “Crusader” to refer to the West with hopes of conjuring up memories of Western oppression and thus unifying Islamic resources under their banner.

Since God laid down the Arabian Peninsula, created its desert, and surrounded it with its seas, no calamity has ever befallen it like these Crusader hosts that have spread in it like locusts, crowding its soil, eating its fruits, and destroying its verdure... Despite the immense destruction inflicted on the Iraqi people at the hands of the Crusader-Jewish alliance... the Americans, nevertheless, in spite of all this, are trying once more to repeat this dreadful slaughter... and to humiliate their Muslim neighbors.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, an examination of the motivations behind the First Crusade has great relevancy for today’s foreign policy. A proper understanding of the motivations, from both the Western and Islamic viewpoints, will not only reveal the causes of the events of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, but it can also help in properly formulating US foreign policy for the Islamic regions of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The critical analysis found in the following chapters is an attempt to gain this proper understanding.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1884), 156.

<sup>2</sup> Derbyshire, John. “Crusading They Went: The Deeds and Misdeeds of Our Spiritual Kin.” *National Review* 80, no. 23. (3 December 2001): 35.

<sup>3</sup> Kemper, Bob. “Bush asked to tone down war rhetoric.” *Chicago Tribune*, 19 September 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Madden, Thomas F. “Crusade Propaganda.” *National Review*, 2 November 2001. On-line. Internet, 15 January 2002. Available from <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-maddenprint110201.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Bin Laden, Usama. “Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders.” *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (Arabic newspaper), 23 February 1998.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Motivations of the Papacy – The Environment**

*Men are at war with one another because each man is at war with himself*

—Francis J. G. Meehan

The first element of this research's critical analysis examines Pope Urban II's motivations for promoting the First Crusade. As the epigraph above suggests, the pope experienced many internal struggles when developing the idea for a crusade. These struggles, born from the religious and political environments of 11<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, could have led the pope to decide on a crusade for numerous secular reasons. The religious context of the pope could have influenced him to desire a legacy for himself, distinguishing himself from his predecessors, or to subjugate the Greek Orthodox Church back under the Roman Catholic Church's control. Similarly, the pope's political context could have influenced him to exert more papal authority against his opponents in the Holy Roman Empire, or his call for a crusade could have been, as Thucydides reminds us, motivated by secular fear when he considered the growing Islamic threat at the very doors of Europe. These possibilities and contexts will now be examined in more detail.

#### **The Religious Context**

The religious environment of 11<sup>th</sup> Century Europe was witness to many schisms. The popes were beginning to successfully separate their bishops from the control of

secular authorities through their reform initiatives, and the Greek Church was severed from the Roman Church altogether in 1054. These schisms presented the pope with an opportunity to build a legacy for himself, and to regain control over his religious rivals. Calling the First Crusade was the ideal way to accomplish both secular motives.

How could the preaching of a “holy war” demonstrate papal authority over his rivals? An understanding of the Cluniac reforms against lay investiture may shed some light. During the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, “bishops were feudal princes; in some places the episcopacy was an hereditary caste. Meanwhile... the faith of the people was being corrupted by superstition. The problem of reform grew acute.”<sup>1</sup> This reform was headquartered in Cluny, France, where Urban was abbot prior to his pontificate. Certain bishops saw the corruption brought about by lay rulers appointing their own clergy. They “realized that the welfare of the Church depended upon freedom from lay control.”<sup>2</sup> This idea eventually grew to the papacy’s claim to the right to depose monarchs and to release subjects from their civil allegiances. Their reasoning: “The Church could not well hope to remain free in the spiritual order without a certain degree of civil control.”<sup>3</sup>

The ensuing division between opposing points of view (papists vs. imperialists) finally reached extreme positions under Pope Gregory VII and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV around 1075. In fact, “the greatest figure in the papal reform was Gregory VII.”<sup>4</sup> So how did the lay investiture reform influence the motives for the First Crusade? “Gregory had wished (Urban) to succeed him... But the legacy of Gregory was not easy to handle, and the new pope, for all his desire to follow in Gregory’s footsteps, was forced into some very difficult situations.”<sup>5</sup> Could the shadow of Gregory’s great legacy have caused Urban to feel a need to create his own legacy, his own place in history? If

so, one could speculate that Urban's secular desire for a legacy might be a partial motivation for his preaching of the First Crusade.

Twenty years earlier, in 1054, another religious rival to the pope formed when the Greek Orthodox Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church and made the Byzantine Emperor its head.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, the Muslim Turks were growing stronger in Asia Minor, thereby presenting a serious immediate threat to the Byzantine Empire. The Emperor asked Pope Gregory VII for military help.

(He) did not forget that he was the head of a church which had broken away from the Pope... (and he) was always quite willing to heal the schism if the Pope would meet him halfway. (But) no Greek understood that the Pope could not go halfway to compromise with error.<sup>7</sup>

Gregory did wish to take advantage of the opportunity, however, by means of a crusade. He hoped that this would renew the religious union between West and East, with the former in control, of course. Being a gifted statesman, Gregory crafted a new plan.

The holy war, which was being so successfully waged in Spain (against the Moors), should be extended into Asia... His troops would drive the infidel out; ... (and) the Christians of the East would resolve their quarrels in grateful humility and acknowledge the supremacy of Rome.<sup>8</sup>

Gregory never saw his crusade idea come to fruition, however, and it was his successor, Pope Urban II, who took up Gregory's plans and gave them more definite shape.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, Urban, too, desired to bring the Greek Church back into the Roman fold, and with no compromises. How is a secular motive of the First Crusade? Urban could very well have had purely religious motives behind this reunion of factions. However, one must remember that Emperor Alexius asked the pope to send only mercenaries to assist him (so that any conquests would be won solely for the Empire). Instead, Urban raised a vast army of regulars that remained loyal to himself. This Latin

army not only failed to relinquish control of all their conquests to Emperor Alexius, but instead, as expected, they converted their conquests into their own Latin kingdoms. Perhaps Urban had this secular power struggle in mind, keeping his religious rival in check until they submitted to Rome, when he raised this great army.

### **The Political Context**

“The origin of the crusades is directly traceable to the moral and political condition of Western Christendom in the eleventh century.”<sup>10</sup> With this being the case, an examination of the pope’s political environment should also reveal some potential motivations for calling the First Crusade. Specifically, the secular reasons of impressing the Holy Roman Emperor with papal authority, directing the Emperor’s troops away from fighting the pope’s supporters, and fear of the growing Islamic conquests are likely motives for calling the First Crusade given the pope’s political pressures in 1095.

The Holy Roman Empire was at odds with the papacy for the vast majority of the century. The popes saw the Empire as their protector against their pagan enemies, and the emperors needed the Church’s recognition that the emperors’ authority came directly from God,<sup>11</sup> but their symbiosis ended there. When Henry IV became emperor in 1056, the wide divergence between the papacy and the Empire was unmistakable, due mainly to the aforementioned lay investiture reform issue. His own empire was divided between supporters of the pope, and the German bishops that resented the pope’s reforms and his alliance with the Normans.<sup>12</sup> In fact, in 1084, at the bidding of Henry IV, a council of German bishops at Mainz deposed Pope Gregory VII and elected their own “antipope.”<sup>13</sup>

Why is this significant to the motives of the First Crusade? As mentioned earlier, Gregory VII was one of the great reformers of the Roman Catholic Church. His mission

to rid the Church of the corruption of lay investiture presented a direct threat to many power bases, including those of the Empire's German bishops.<sup>14</sup> Gregory's successor, the French Urban II, was selected to be pope for his commitment to carry out Gregory's reforms, and was himself often found in many power struggles with the Empire.<sup>15</sup> Could Urban's call for a crusade in 1095 have partly been an attempt to demonstrate his papal authority to impress the Empire? Pope Gregory VII, and later, Pope Urban II, asserted that the only valid theocracy was papal, not royal.<sup>16</sup> One very effective way for the pope to impress Henry IV that his papal authority was greater than Henry's royal authority would have been to convince Henry's troops to abandon their master and prosecute a war on the pope's behalf. And this is exactly what happened in 1095.

Additionally, due to a civil war between papists and imperialists, Urban himself was a fugitive from his own Rome for the vast majority of his pontificate.<sup>17</sup> Could his sermon's call to "direct the turbulent energies of Christian warriors against infidels and away from their fellow-Catholics"<sup>18</sup> have in reality been an attempt to employ the Empire's armies on some other task directed away from his Rome? Evidence does show a sizeable German army in the First Crusade<sup>19</sup>, and Emperor Henry IV's German forces coincidentally left Urban's Italy the year that the First Crusade was launched, 1097.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Urban had to contend with the growing Islamic influence in the region. During Urban's pontificate, the Byzantine Empire's power was in decline. It was being menaced by the Seljuk Turks, and the Emperor was asking the papacy for military help.

Alexius' trained regular army that had been destroyed 25 years ago at Manzikert had never been replaced... Alexius, who had plenty of money, relied on foreign mercenaries... He asked the Pope to proclaim to the (Piacenza) council that (Norman) knights would be serving God if they took service with the Greek army in defense of the oppressed Christians of Asia Minor.<sup>21</sup>

Urban reassured the Emperor that troops would come, but Urban himself realized the necessity of such action because his own interests were also at risk. Here is another example of the probability that Urban's motives for the First Crusade were secular.

Urban promised to ask for recruits... He was all the more willing because he feared that Constantinople was not so strong as its Emperor supposed. At any moment, the Turks might break in; and then they would be on the borders of the Latin west, his own responsibility.<sup>22</sup>

As we are reminded by Thucydides' writings (about 1500 years before Urban II), the fear of a growing neighboring power base is a strong motivator for going to war.<sup>23</sup> Such worldly fear can hardly be called a sacred motivation. Instead this demonstrates nothing more than a wise leader looking over his shoulder at the approaching secular threats.

## Summary

In summary, the papacy could have been motivated to preach the First Crusade for many secular reasons in addition to its sacred ones. Given his religious environment, Pope Urban II could have called the crusade to etch out a legacy for himself in history, out of the shadows of the great reformer, Gregory VII. Or perhaps he wanted to subjugate the Greek Orthodox Church, which separated itself from the papacy just 40 years prior, back under the Roman Catholic Church. Given his political environment, the pope could have been motivated by the need to exert more papal authority against the threats of the Holy Roman Empire, or his call for a crusade could have been an attempt to stop German Catholics from fighting the papists by directing their energies elsewhere. Or, as Thucydides reminds us, perhaps the pope was motivated by secular fear when he considered the growing regional Islamic threat. All of these are strong possibilities for secular motivations of the First Crusade given Pope Urban II's complex environment.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> McSorley, Joseph. *An Outline History of The Church by Centuries: From St. Peter to Pius XII* (St. Louis, M.O.: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), 290.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 308.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>4</sup> Corbett, James A. *The Papacy: A Brief History* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Norstrand Co., Inc., 1956), 29.

<sup>5</sup> John, Eric, F.R.Hist.S. *The Popes: A Concise History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 208.

<sup>6</sup> Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. 3 vols. (London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1951-1954), 96-97.

<sup>7</sup> Duggan, Alfred. *The Story of the Crusades: 1097-1291* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. 3 vols. (London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1951-1954), 99.

<sup>9</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. 15 vols. Edited by Charles G. Herbermann, et al. (New York: The Gilmary Society, 1913), 545.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 545.

<sup>11</sup> John, Eric, F.R.Hist.S. *The Popes: A Concise History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 183.

<sup>12</sup> McSorley, Joseph. *An Outline History of The Church by Centuries: From St. Peter to Pius XII* (St. Louis, M.O.: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), 292.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 293.

<sup>14</sup> Tierney, Brian. *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300-1475*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970), 179-180.

<sup>15</sup> John, Eric, F.R.Hist.S. *The Popes: A Concise History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 208-209.

<sup>16</sup> Tierney, Brian. *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300-1475*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970), 183.

<sup>17</sup> Cheetham, Nicolas. *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the Popes from St. Peter to John Paul II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 101.

<sup>18</sup> John, Eric, F.R.Hist.S. *The Popes: A Concise History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 209.

<sup>19</sup> Cheetham, Nicolas. *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the Popes from St. Peter to John Paul II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 103.

<sup>20</sup> Delaney, John J. and James E. Tobin. *Dictionary of Catholic Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961), 1142.

<sup>21</sup> Duggan, Alfred. *The Story of the Crusades: 1097-1291* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>23</sup> Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Thomas Hobbes, 1841. In *The Art of War in World History: From Antiquity to the Nuclear Age*. Edited by Gerard Chaliand. (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1994), 67.

## Chapter 3

### The Motivations of the Papacy – The Sermon

*Brood of vipers! How could you speak to good effect, wicked as you are?  
It is from the heart's overflow that the mouth speaks.*

—Matthew 12:34

Continuing with the first element of this research's critical analysis, examining Pope Urban II's motivations for the First Crusade, this research now considers the pope's actual sermon, delivered in Cluny, France in November 1095. As the epigraph above suggests, one cannot purport to know Pope Urban II's motives (heart), but perhaps one can gather clues about his motives by analyzing the more tangible records of his very words. Is the sermon true to its sacred motives when compared to the original intent of the Crusade? Is the sermon true to the foundational Christian doctrine of 1095? Finally, are there any elements of political symbolism in the sermon? The answers to these questions may reveal the presence of alternative, secular motivations behind the pope's sermon besides his acclaimed religious motives.

#### Original Intent

The original intent of the First Crusade, as seen earlier, was for Pope Gregory VII to assist the Byzantine Empire in its defense against the Turks' encroachments. But Pope Urban II attached some other elements onto the original intent, and he included these

elements in his sermon of 1095. An analysis of these additional elements in his sermon may suggest alternative secular motives behind the pope's crusade. Unfortunately, in this analysis, we do not have an accurate verbal account of his actual words. Instead, the only accounts of the sermon by reliable chroniclers contemporary to Urban were believed to have been written "a few years later, and colored in the light of subsequent events."<sup>1</sup> There exist many versions of Urban's sermon, but three in particular have much in common: Fulcher of Chartres (1101), Robert of Reims (1107-8), and Baudri of Dol (c. 1108). Each account mentions different themes, but some topics of Urban's sermon are common to all three. By numbering the times each common topic appears in the various versions, Dana C. Munro categorized Urban's topics by what was "certain, probable, and possible" to be found in Urban's actual sermon.

Under what Urban certainly said, (Munro) listed the necessity of aiding eastern Christians (the Greek Church), appeals for aid from the east (the Byzantine Emperor), the advance of the Turks, the sufferings of eastern Christians, Turkish desecration of Christian churches and holy places, the special sanctity of Jerusalem, the expedition as God's work, the grant of plenary indulgence, the necessity of waging righteous wars, the promise of eternal and temporal rewards, the removal of all impediments to participation, and God's leadership of the expedition. As probable topics, (Munro) suggested the suffering of pilgrims, the participation of both rich and poor, and domestic hardships; and as possible topics, praise of Frankish bravery and contempt for the Turks.<sup>2</sup>

So, what can be gleaned from these topics about Urban's motivations? Is his sermon true to the original intent of the Crusade? As mentioned in the previous chapter, when Emperor Alexius I asked Urban for military assistance, he asked only for mercenaries to help him reconquer Asia Minor. Instead, in his sermon, the pope called for the restoration of "the special sanctity of Jerusalem" from "Turkish desecration." This caused Crusader leaders like Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless to lead "a

company of 12,000 disqualified irregulars, moved by faith and famine...(to) Constantinople like a cloud of locusts, hardly what Alexius had requested in his appeal.”<sup>3</sup> Could this deviation from Alexius’ original intent be a revelation of some alternative secular motives held by Urban? The pope called for the conquest of “a city Alexius did not particularly wish to capture. The present ruler of Jerusalem was the Caliph of Egypt, who was on friendly terms with the Emperor.”<sup>4</sup> This suggests that the pope used the Emperor’s cry for help, “the necessity of aiding eastern Christians” and “appeals for aid from the east,” to satisfy some alternative secular motive. Perhaps this motive was the establishment of a Latin kingdom to the immediate south of the pope’s religious and political rival, Byzantium, to keep it in check. Or perhaps it was the establishment of Latin trade routes into the Levant for the prosperity of the Papal States and the pope’s Norman allies. If the pope truly had the Emperor’s aid (the original intent) in mind, he would not have called for the liberation of Jerusalem.

### **Foundational Doctrine**

How does the pope’s sermon measure up to the conventional foundational Christian teachings of 1095? Are there any deviations from Christian doctrine that would suggest less-than-sacred motives? By being the head of the Roman Catholic Church, one of Urban’s foundational doctrines was the New Testament. But does the New Testament support the idea of a crusade? Some historians and theologians suggest that “It was forgotten that there was no justification for war in the Gospel. There was no passage that spoke in favour of war, none that advocated a crusade or the levying of an army.”<sup>5</sup>

So does this mean that his motives for calling the First Crusade were secular? Not necessarily. Urban still found Scripture to justify his crusade, in the Old Testament.

The two favorite Old Testament contexts serving as a foil for the crusades were the stories of the conquest of the Promised Land by the Israelites... and the heroic fight of the Maccabees against the enemies of Israel... Both stories were perfect biblical examples of a war fought by God's people, led by the Lord against the enemies of his religion. They had been used widely in crusade propaganda since the First Crusade... Comparing the crusades to the Israelites' wars in the Old Testament was an easy way of addressing the question of the justification of the crusade... God directed and approved of the wars.<sup>6</sup>

So, despite the lack of New Testament support, Pope Urban II may still have had partially sacred motives in calling the First Crusade, based on Old Testament examples.

Additionally, the Roman Catholic Church also elevated extra-Biblical literary works of their predecessors to the same level of authority as Scripture, thus making these writings another foundational doctrine for Urban. Specifically, Urban referred to Augustine's thoughts of the "just war" principle as justification for his crusade when the pope appealed to "the necessity of waging righteous wars." Augustine proposed that certain wars are just in their motivations. "We Christians call rulers happy... if they take vengeance on wrong because of the necessity to direct and protect the state."<sup>7</sup> Augustine proposed that just war seeks to obtain restitution for a hurt by returning to the pre-war status quo, and that the ruler who wages such a war actually plays the role of God's scourge.<sup>8</sup> Pope Urban II clearly applied this theory when he called Catholics to reclaim the city of Jerusalem from the Muslims, returning the city to the pre-war status of Christian, and scourging its Muslim oppressors. Augustine's influence on Urban may also be seen in the campaigns that resulted.

The wars they waged were those which, in the words of Augustine, "might be undertaken by good men at God's command and for the kingdom of Christ." They held these to be entirely opposite to the criminal wars, the wars of conquest, marauding expeditions.<sup>9</sup>

So even though one source of foundational doctrine, the New Testament, offered little

support for Urban's crusade, he could have still felt justified that his motives were at least partially sacred based on Augustine's teachings and certain Old Testament examples.

### **Political Symbolism**

The final analysis to perform on Urban's sermon of 1095 is a search for any political (secular) symbolism that he may have employed. The presence of political symbolism in Urban's sermon does not prove that his motives were secular, but such a discovery would certainly add another exhibit in the growing stack of evidence. Specifically, Urban's sermon includes "rhetoric, setting and condensation," all key elements of political symbolism. Such symbolism suggests that the sacred content of Urban's sermon was insufficient to gather the support he desired for this foreign war, so he resorted to political symbolism to meet his political (secular) goals.

The first exhibit of evidence for political symbolism found in Urban's sermon is in the form of rhetoric. Urban cleverly extended and applied idea of "The Peace of God" (an idea birthed in the beginning of the 11th Century where bishops imposed truces to get fellow Christians to stop warring against each other) by calling for Catholics to stop fighting each other and to join the fight against "the infidel." Was he simply misusing the accepted ideas and terminology of the day to get Emperor Henry IV's forces to stop fighting the papists? Additionally, the pope declared plenary indulgences (a remission of the entire temporal punishment for sin) for any who undertook the crusade. As the Crusader Geoffrey de Villehardouin wrote, "because the Indulgence was so great the hearts of men were much moved; and many took the cross because the Indulgence was so great."<sup>10</sup> Did the pope take advantage of the average person's faith through rhetoric (referring to the Peace of God and indulgences) to get them to fight a war they normally

would not? Murray Edelman proposes that the political symbol of rhetoric is a powerful tool in swaying men's hearts. "Potent symbols justify man's lot and his acts; and they are invoked not only explicitly but also implicitly through the structure of language."<sup>11</sup> Carl Erdmann takes this claim one step further, suggesting that the pope manipulated the masses: "Urban used such references to Jerusalem, the Sepulcher, and pilgrimage merely as hollow slogans designed to deceive pious people, including the clergy, into supporting his secret purpose."<sup>12</sup> According to Erdmann, that purpose was to forge a military (secular) alliance between Rome and Byzantium for the reconquest of Asia Minor.

Also, Urban employed the political symbol of setting to his advantage. He was careful to take his message to a friendly audience, even praising Frankish bravery. "When Urban was speaking as a Frenchman to Frenchmen, his eloquence was no doubt irresistible. He had chosen the right moment and the right audience for an appeal that would surely have fallen flat in cynical and divided Italy."<sup>13</sup> According to Edelman, "The common element in political settings... (is that) they are unabashedly built up to emphasize a departure from men's daily routine, a special or heroic quality."<sup>14</sup> Urban consciously chose this audience knowing that his message would have received been much better due to the political symbolism alone, regardless of the sermon's content.

This leads to a third element of political symbolism found in Urban's sermon, condensation. Along with other themes, the pope reminded the people of their present "domestic hardships," in his sermon, and the people responded as the pope had hoped.

The economic and social reasons for seeking an outlet from contemporary miseries – overpopulation, poverty, lack of cultivable land, subjection to oppressive lords, and the general drabness of life – were probably as potent (in gaining popular support for the Crusade) as religious idealism.<sup>15</sup>

When considered with the other topics of his sermon, it seems as if Urban intentionally

employed “condensation” political symbolism to get the people to enlist in a war they would have otherwise ignored? “Condensation symbols evoke the emotions associated with the situation. They condense into one symbolic event, sign, or act patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Urban’s sermon included all of these elements.

So how does analyzing the political symbolism of Pope Urban II’s sermon contribute to the question of his motives? “The basic thesis is that mass publics respond to currently conspicuous political symbols: not to ‘facts,’ and not to moral codes embedded in the character or soul, but to gestures and speeches that make up the drama of the state.”<sup>17</sup> If his use of the political symbols of rhetoric, setting, and condensation was intentional, then one may conclude that the sacred content of the pope’s message was insufficient to garnish support. Perhaps his resorting to political symbolism demonstrates his own conceding that his crusade was in reality just another political (secular) venture.

## **Summary**

In summary, by examining the pope’s actual sermon of 1095, a deviation from the Crusade’s original intent is revealed, thus suggesting some alternative motives. And although the foundational doctrine of the New Testament does not advocate crusading, Urban may have still felt justified in calling the First Crusade based on the doctrines of the Old Testament and Augustine’s writings. However, theses justifications may be explained away as merely being forms of political symbolism, employed to manipulate the masses into supporting the pope’s secular goals. Indeed, given the verbiage of Urban’s sermon of 1095, the papacy could have had many varied motives for preaching the First Crusade, secular as well as sacred.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. 3 vols. (London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1951-1954), 107.

<sup>2</sup> Cole, Penny J. *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095-1270* (Cambridge, M.A.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Atiya, Aziz S. *Crusade, Commerce, and Culture*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962), 58-59.

<sup>4</sup> Duggan, Alfred. *The Story of the Crusades: 1097-1291* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Gontard, Friedrich. *The Chair of Peter: A History of the Papacy*. Translated by A.J. and E.F. Peeler. (New York: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), 250.

<sup>6</sup> Maier, Christoph T. *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55-56.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine. *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. (New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1984), 200.

<sup>8</sup> Contamine, Philippe. *War in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Michael Jones. (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), 264.

<sup>9</sup> Gontard, Friedrich. *The Chair of Peter: A History of the Papacy*. Translated by A.J. and E.F. Peeler. (New York: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), 251.

<sup>10</sup> Duffy, Eamon. *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (Yale University Press, 1997), 104-105.

<sup>11</sup> Edelman, Murray. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 129.

<sup>12</sup> Cole, Penny J. *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095-1270* (Cambridge, M.A.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Cheetham, Nicolas. *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the Popes from St. Peter to John Paul II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 102.

<sup>14</sup> Edelman, Murray. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 96.

<sup>15</sup> Cheetham, Nicolas. *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the Popes from St. Peter to John Paul II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 103.

<sup>16</sup> Edelman, Murray. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 172.

## Chapter 4

### The Motivations of the Crusaders – A Western View

*The heart of all men is perverse and diseased; who shall have knowledge of it? Who but I, the Lord, can see into a man's heart, and read his inmost thoughts.*

—Jeremiah 17:9

As seen in the previous chapters, there is a high probability that the papacy created the First Crusade due to both sacred and secular motivations. The same may be said for the second element of this critical analysis: the motivations of the Crusaders themselves. Of course, as the epigraph above reminds us, it is impossible to know the hearts (motives) of men, and especially of those who lived over 900 years ago. However, Western accounts of the Crusaders' actions do suggest evidence that the Crusaders' true motives were both secular, as well as sacred in nature.

One of the best-informed and most perceptive medieval historians of the Crusades, Archbishop William of Tyre, noted... 'Not all of them, indeed, were there in behalf of the Lord... Some were there so as not to desert their friends. Others were present lest they be thought idle, while others, still, were there out of frivolity or in order to escape their creditors... All of them went for different reasons.'<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will first examine the evidence that suggests the Crusaders were motivated by secular reasons. The accounts that point to the Crusaders' potentially religious motives will be examined next, followed by a short summary of the chapter's findings.

## **Evidence for Secular Motives**

The New Testament epigraph above, along with many other verses, sets forth a Christian doctrine of “spiritual” warfare, where the enemy and the weapons are found in spiritual dimensions, not physical ones. The conversion and preservation of souls are the goals of such warfare, not the eradication of scores of non-believers. Yet, the Crusaders were not motivated by these spiritual principles. Instead, Western accounts of some Crusaders’ actions reveal motives of licentiousness, arrogance, and greed.

Licentiousness is the belief that one has a right, or license, to commit unlawful acts, and a good number of the Crusaders did just that - frequently committing heinous crimes simply because they could. After Pope Urban’s sermon in 1095 calling for the First Crusade, there were two “People’s Crusades” that consisted more of civilians than regular military troops. Their actions demonstrate that these irregulars joined the crusade for less than holy reasons. “This second wave of premature Crusaders contained more brigands than peasants. Before they set out, they achieved a great massacre of Jews in the Rhineland, in spite of strenuous efforts by the clergy and imperial officials to keep the peace.”<sup>2</sup> At first glance, one may be tempted to call this religious zeal, but it is clear that the Crusaders acted contrary to the religious leaders who tried to prevent this atrocity.

This was nothing less than unrestrained murder. A second incident records:

Not long after Peter (the Hermit) had passed over into Bithynia, a certain Teuton priest, Gottschalk by name... persuaded many Teutons from all parts of that kingdom to undertake the same task (of Crusading). With about fifteen thousand pilgrims whom he had gathered for the march, he entered Hungary, where he was admitted without difficulty. By the orders of the king, the Hungarians offered merchandise at reasonable rates to his army. The latter abused the abundance of food, however, and gave themselves over to idleness and drunkenness. They inflicted many wrongs on the natives. They plundered, they laid violent hands on the wares offered for sale in the public markets, and they slew the people in utter

disregard of the laws of hospitality.<sup>3</sup>

These acts occurred at the end of the First Crusade, as well, and by military regulars.

Neither the Gospel nor the word of Christ now ruled in the Holy Land, but politics and war reigned supreme. Many were drawn by the legendary riches of the East. At the Holy Places, there were not many hands joined in prayer; they struck, plundered, and robbed.<sup>4</sup>

Besides licentiousness, accounts also reveal Crusader motives of arrogance. They frequently argued among themselves over conquests, demonstrating little Christianity in their actions. “But instead of marching on Jerusalem without delay, the chiefs (of the Crusaders) spent several months in a quarrel due to the rivalry of Raymond of Saint-Gilles and Bohemond, both of whom claimed the right to Antioch.”<sup>5</sup> Crusader arrogance even led them to fight the very the very Christians they were sent to assist, the Byzantines. “Encouraged by the small success and feeling that he was now committed to fight, (the Crusader leader) Godfrey decided to move his camp and to attack (Constantinople) itself.”<sup>6</sup> Sacred motives should exclude attacking fellow Christians.

Finally, evidence shows that the Crusaders were also motivated to go to war because of greed. “Moved by... enlightened self-interest... the knights of the First Crusade marched into Syria, (and) occupied Antioch and Jerusalem.”<sup>7</sup> And as the years progressed, the resulting four Latin states grew extremely rich, exactly as planned.

The Syrian ports were regularly visited by Italian fleets, which obtained there the spices and silks brought by caravans from the Far East. Thus, during the first half of the twelfth century, the Christian states of the East were completely organized, and even eclipsed in wealth and prosperity most of the Western states.”<sup>8</sup>

The enormous trade potential of the Levant was obvious to all Westerners and many Crusaders therefore joined this expedition to claim their part of the monetary prize early.

“Certainly, the preaching of the First Crusade appealed to Christian abhorrence of Islam;

but from the first, other motives were present, and the crusade included... land-hungry Normans and the Genoese, eager to exploit commercial opportunity.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Evidence for Sacred Motives**

Not all of the Crusaders’ motivations were secular, however. There is also evidence that many of the participants of the First Crusade joined for purely sacred reasons. These religious motivations were divided into zeal, plenary indulgences, and pilgrimage.

Religious zeal was evident all throughout the First Crusade, starting on the very day it was first preached by Pope Urban II. “The motives which made men go on crusades were many and various, but one was a genuine religious zeal, a feeling that it was intolerable that the most sacred spot on earth, the Holy Sepulcher, should not be in Christian hands.”<sup>10</sup> This zeal, unfortunately, soon became manifested in numerous slaughters of Muslim and Hebrew civilians. For example, after the Crusaders captured Jerusalem, they indiscriminately slaughtered Islamic and Jewish civilians without regard to age or gender. “Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city... in Solomon’s porch and in his temple our men rode in the blood of the Saracens up to the knees of their horses.”<sup>11</sup> Although massacres like this one seem criminal by today’s standards, one cannot argue that the motive was an intense religious zeal.

As seen earlier in this research, people also joined the First Crusade for a second religious reason, the plenary indulgences promised by the pope.

(Pope Urban II) granted an indulgence, or free pardon from the (temporal) punishment due to sin, to all Crusaders, which was equivalent to a lifetime of hard penance. For... violent men in a world much preoccupied with sin and its consequences, this was a powerful incentive.”<sup>12</sup>

To many, the perils and expenses associated with the crusade were an acceptable price to

pay for the hope of having one's penance expunged. And when this idea was coupled with the misery of their current living conditions, the choice to crusade became easy.

Finally, there is strong evidence that some Crusaders genuinely considered themselves to be on a holy pilgrimage. For example, even though some Crusaders did stay in the newly conquered lands to make a profit and a name for themselves, others returned home immediately after the conquest of Jerusalem, wanting no lands or fame.

“After the liberation of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Egyptian army of relief at Ascalon (the end of the First Crusade), the survivors of the crusade abandoned most of their weapons and returned home carrying their palms as a sign of victory.”<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, the majority of the Crusaders returned home financially broke and in debt.

“There is very little evidence for the crusaders coming home wealthy... All crusaders had faced potentially crippling expenses and they and their families had pledges to redeem”<sup>14</sup>

Surely, men with secular motives do not pay such a heavy price to get so little in return.

It seems that for these Crusaders, much wealth was sacrificed to join the pilgrimage, and when it was done, they were content to return home with no material reward.

## **Summary**

As was the case with Pope Urban II, it seems probable that there were both secular and sacred motivations behind the Crusaders' actions. “The French and Norman nobility who came forward in some numbers wished both to secure salvation and the possibility of establishing themselves in the newly conquered Holy Land.”<sup>15</sup> Concerning the secular motivations, there was strong evidence of the Crusaders' licentiousness, arrogance, and greed. Regarding their sacred motives, the Crusaders demonstrated an intense religious zeal, a strong desire to obtain plenary indulgences, and a yearning to complete a holy

pilgrimage. Indeed, the Crusaders simultaneously embraced both secular and sacred motivations. It provided the perfect setting where “a knight could serve his own inclinations and the Church at the same time.”<sup>16</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Brundage, James A. *The Crusades: Motives and Achievements*. (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath and Co., 1964), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Duggan, Alfred. *The Story of the Crusades: 1097-1291* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 27.

<sup>3</sup> William, Archbishop of Tyre. *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*. 2 vols. Translated and annotated by Emily A. Babcock and A. C. Krey. (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Gontard, Friedrich. *The Chair of Peter: A History of the Papacy*. Translated by A.J. and E.F. Peeler. (New York: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), 250.

<sup>5</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. 15 vols. Edited by Charles G. Herbermann, et al. (New York: The Gilmary Society, 1913), 546-547.

<sup>6</sup> Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. 3 vols. (London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1951-1954), 151.

<sup>7</sup> McSorley, Joseph. *An Outline History of The Church by Centuries: From St. Peter to Pius XII* (St. Louis, M.O.: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), 291.

<sup>8</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. 15 vols. Edited by Charles G. Herbermann, et al. (New York: The Gilmary Society, 1913), 547.

<sup>9</sup> Smail, R. C. *Crusading Warfare, 1097-1193*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>10</sup> John, Eric, F.R.Hist.S. *The Popes: A Concise History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 184.

<sup>11</sup> Munro, Dana C. *The Kingdom of the Crusaders*. (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966), 56.

<sup>12</sup> Duffy, Eamon. *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (Yale University Press, 1997), 105.

<sup>13</sup> Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144-145.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>15</sup> John, Eric, F.R.Hist.S. *The Popes: A Concise History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 209.

<sup>16</sup> Cash, Wilson. *Christendom and Islam: Their Contacts and Cultures Down the Centuries*. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1937), 27.

## Chapter 5

### The Motivations of the Crusaders – An Islamic View

*You will know them by the fruit they yield. Can grapes be plucked from briars, or figs from thistles?*

—Matthew 7:16

Continuing with the second element in this critical analysis of the First Crusade, the motivations of the Crusaders, the opposing (Islamic) view must also be considered. “The full, composite story of the Crusades needs, of course, the drawing together of evidence from both sides of the divide to illuminate each other.”<sup>1</sup> As with the preceding chapters, this analysis of the Islamic view of the Crusaders’ actions also reveals both secular and sacred motivations. Referring to the epigraph above, 11<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic chroniclers saw the Crusaders yielding the secular fruit of imperialistic expansion, while others saw the same religious fruit of genocidal zeal that the Western chroniclers recorded. Both are presented below.

#### Evidence for Secular Motives

The Muslims of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century did not accept the Crusades as being wholly religious in nature. In fact, medieval Muslim chroniclers of the First Crusade fail to even remotely link the Crusader invasion of the Levant to Pope Urban II’s religious intentions to aid the Eastern Christians defense and to recapture the Holy Land.<sup>2</sup> Instead, one



chronicler, Al-Azimi, recognized an imperialistic trend of European expansionism into Islamic lands.

He implies that there is a pattern of Crusader movement southwards which extends from Spain through North Africa to the Levant. He sees the link between the fall of Toledo to the Christians of Muslim Spain in 461/1068, the taking of al-Mahdiyya in North Africa by the Normans of Sicily in 479/1086, and the coming of the Crusaders to the Levant.<sup>3</sup>

Another Islamic historian, Ibn al-Athir, also captures the geopolitical trend of the European conquests “southwards in the wider Mediterranean world. However, he does not seem to see any specific religious motivation behind the Crusaders’ arrival in the Holy Land.”<sup>4</sup> It seems the Islamic view of Crusader actions saw little fruit pointing towards sacred motives at all. Interestingly, as was mentioned earlier in this research, Pope Gregory based his idea of crusade on the success of the Catholic campaign against the Moors in Spain (page 7), and the papacy itself was allied to the very Sicilian Normans who successfully invaded North Africa (page 8). In light of these contexts, the Islamic perception of European imperialistic expansion does not look all that far-fetched as a probable motivation for the First Crusade.

### **Evidence for Sacred Motives**

Despite the aforementioned evidence pointing towards a secular imperialism, many 11<sup>th</sup> Century Muslims still believed the Frankish invasion of their lands were religious in motivation, and referred to the resulting wars as being such. For example, when the king of Damascus received many reports of a vast number of Franks approaching from Constantinople in July 1097, he immediately perceived their intentions as being the eradication of all Muslims from the Levant, and he thus called for a holy war.

The king... set about collecting forces, raising levies, and carrying out the

obligation of Holy War... (The Franks) turned their forces against him, defeated him, and scattered his army, killing many and taking many captive... When the news was received of this shameful calamity to the cause of Islam, the anxiety of the people became acute and their fear and alarm increased.<sup>5</sup>

Another reason why the Islamic people viewed the Crusaders actions as being religious in motive could also be that they saw many parallels to their own idea of Jihad, or “holy war.” The Islamic teaching of Jihad found in the Hadith states:

If the infidels upon receiving the call (of Islam) neither consent to it nor agree to pay capitation tax, it is incumbent on the Moslems to call upon God for assistance and to make war upon them, because God is... the destroyer of His enemies, the infidels... the Prophet, moreover, commands us to do so. And having done so, the Moslems must then, with God’s assistance, attack the infidels with all manner of war-like engines, and must also set fire to their habitations, and must inundate them with water and tear up their plantations, and tread down their grain.<sup>6</sup>

Chroniclers like Ibn al-Adim recorded Crusader actions that looked a lot like those written in the Hadith.

(The Franks) killed a great number under torture. They extorted people’s treasures. They prevented people from (getting) water, and sold it to them. Most of the people died of thirst... No treasure remained there that was not extorted by them. They... burned mosques and houses.<sup>7</sup>

When the Muslims witnessed the Crusaders conducting these actions against their fellow Muslims, how could they not interpret the Crusaders’ acts as being the European version of Jihad? Thus, medieval Muslims also saw religious motives behind the First Crusade.

## **Summary**

Any effective critical analysis of a historical event must include accounts from more than one point of view if at all possible. The preceding Islamic point of view supports the previously examined Western perspective in that it reveals evidence that suggests both secular and religious motives were behind the Crusaders’ actions. Islamic chroniclers of

the First Crusade deduced an imperialistic trend in recent European conquests of the region, thus leading them to believe the Crusaders' were fulfilling secular desires. However, other Islamic chroniclers perceived the Crusaders as conducting a European version of Jihad, a religious idea that was very familiar to medieval Muslims. Indeed, as has been demonstrated throughout this research, both secular and sacred motives existed.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Qalanisi, Ibn. *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*. Translated by H. A. R. Gibb. (London, UK: Luzac and Co., 1932), 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> Cash, Wilson. *Christendom and Islam: Their Contacts and Cultures Down the Centuries*. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1937), 27.

<sup>7</sup> Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 63.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

*That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun... It has already been in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things.*

—Ecclesiastes 1:9-11

This research conducted a critical analysis of the motivations of the First Crusade by performing a comprehensive document review of medieval and contemporary primary and secondary sources, and dividing the findings of the investigation into two elements: the motivations of the pope (analyzing his religious and political contexts, as well as his actual sermon), and the motivations of the Crusaders themselves (from the Western and the Islamic perspectives). Such an examination enables one to go beyond the mere recorded facts, as Clausewitz recommends, to the causal influences behind those facts. In this chapter, the summaries of these findings will be compiled, followed by an overall conclusion that revisits the relevancy of this topic for today.

### Summary of Preceding Chapters

When examining the motivations of Pope Urban II for calling the First Crusade, it was demonstrated that there is a strong possibility that the pope possessed various secular motives in addition to any sacred ones he may have held. Specifically, after focusing on

his religious and political environments, the possibility arose that the pope may have been secularly motivated to call the First Crusade due to a desire to build a personal legacy, to subjugate the Greek Orthodox Church back under Roman Catholic control, a need to exert more papal authority against the Holy Roman Empire, an attempt to stop German Catholics from fighting the papists, or as a response to fear of the regional Islamic threat.

By examining the pope's actual sermon, a deviation from the Crusade's original intent is revealed, as is a lack of doctrinal support from the New Testament. And although Urban may have still felt justified in calling the First Crusade based on the doctrines of the Old Testament and Augustine's writings, these justifications may be explained away as merely being forms of political symbolism, employed to manipulate the masses into supporting the pope's secular goals. Thus, the first element of the critical analysis suggests that the pope could have had many varied motives for calling the First Crusade, secular as well as sacred.

Moving to the second element of the critical analysis, the motivations of the Crusaders themselves, accounts of the Crusaders' actions from both the Western and Islamic view were examined. Western chroniclers revealed evidence of the Crusaders' secular motivations of licentiousness, arrogance, and greed. However, they also showed that the Crusaders demonstrated the sacred motives of an intense religious zeal, a strong desire to obtain plenary indulgences, and a yearning to complete a holy pilgrimage. Likewise, some Islamic chroniclers concluded that the Crusaders were fulfilling their secular desires of imperialistic conquest, while others perceived the Crusaders' actions as being religious, a European version of Jihad. As with Urban, evidence suggests the Crusaders held both secular and sacred motives.

## Overall Conclusion and Relevancy

As seen from the summary of the critical analysis, both secular and religious motivations were present in the First Crusade, despite the claims of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century Roman Catholic Church that the campaign was purely sacred in nature. This finding is significant to contemporary Western foreign policy formers because today's Islamic radicals refer to the West as "Crusaders." When they do this, they are telling the rest of the world to expect the West to be imperialistic (secular) and genocidal (religious) in its dealings with Islamic peoples. "In the Muslim East, the Crusades played a transient but unforgettable role which has left its impact on the Islamic consciousness until the present day."<sup>1</sup> Unlike the mistake made by President Bush on 16 September 2001, Western policy-makers need to be aware of this when making future statements and decisions.

Therefore, a working knowledge of the motivations of a "holy war" from 900 years ago can pay great dividends in today's political arena. As Boston College sociologist Peter Berger reminds us, "Those who neglect religion in their analysis of contemporary affairs do so at great peril."<sup>2</sup> Today's Western nations need to understand that, as the epigraph above suggests, if one forgets the lessons of the past, they are doomed to repeat them. If the West understands that its Islamic enemies accuse them of being genocidal (religious zealots) and imperialistic (secular and greedy), then the West can adjust its policy against that enemy accordingly and prove them wrong in the world's opinion.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Berger, Peter. "Socialism in Retreat." *National Interest Magazine* 46. (Winter 1996/1997), 12.

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